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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JULY 24, 2009

Summary: Reports on local political developments dominated headlines in all newspapers on Friday. Newspapers ran reports that Secretary Clinton "hailed Pakistan's 'courageous' progress against Taliban and Al Qaeda extremists" after holding talks with her Pakistani counterpart Qureshi on the sidelines of ASEAN security moot in Phuket, Thailand. U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke's Pakistan visit continued to garner extensive media coverage. Some major newspapers highlighted his statement that the "U.S. paid insufficient attention to Baitullah Mehsud until very recently." Reports and photographs of Ambassador Patterson's meeting with Prime Minister Gilani also received prominent display. Several dailies also reported that "one of Usama's sons 'may be dead'." At the same time, a statement by some Taliban commanders denying the reports of the death of Saad bin Laden also received prominent coverage. Newspapers also quoted U.S. Commander Admiral Mullen's saying that the "top leadership of Al Qaeda, including Usama, was in Pakistan."

Most major newspapers ran editorials on local themes including summoning of former President Musharraf by the Supreme Court. However, several dailies editorialized Mr. Holbrooke's visit to Pakistan. Commenting on his advice to Pakistan to move its troops to Afghan border, the second-largest, Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt," called it "America's animosity in the garb of friendship." The prestigious English daily, "Dawn," observed that the "American strikes have come in the way of Pakistan taking ownership of the battle in the tribal belt, and given fresh ammunition to elements whose political agenda is more or less limited to stoking anti-U.S. sentiment." The populist, often sensational national English daily "The News," noted that "six months of Obama is not going to cancel out eight years of Bush, but at least a credible effort is nowadays being made by the U.S. to engage in dialogue with us rather than shout at us from the sidelines." End Summary.

News Stories

"Clinton Lauds Pakistan's 'Courage' In Terror War" "Dawn" (07/24)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hailed Pakistan's 'courageous' progress against Taliban and Al Qaeda extremists after holding talks with Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Phuket on Thursday. Ms. Clinton, who met the foreign minister on the sidelines of a major Asian security forum, also said Pakistan had made 'impressive' progress in dealing with nearly two million people displaced by battles against the Taliban."

"Holbrooke Calls Baitullah Most Dangerous, Odious: U.S. Paid

Insufficient Attention To Mehsud" "Daily Times" (07/24)

"U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke on Thursday branded Baitullah Mehsud one of the most 'odious and dangerous people' in the region, and said although the U.S. had been slow in recognizing his importance, the TTP Chief's elimination was 'without a doubt' of strategic importance to Washington, Holbrooke told journalists before leaving for Afghanistan at the end of two days of talks with the Pakistani leadership."

"Holbrooke Visit To Jalozai Camp Cancelled" "The Nation" (07/24)

"The scheduled visit of the U.S. Special Envoy for Pakistan Richard Holbrooke to IDPs Jalozai Camp was cancelled at the last moment. The authorities concerned were unaware of the visit's cancellation, but it is believed that the visit was cancelled due to security reasons."

"Drone Issue Discussed With Holbrooke: FO" "The News" (07/24)

"Replying to a question about visit of U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, the Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said the issue of drone attacks also came up for discussion during his meetings with Pakistani leadership and Pakistan has conveyed its concern regarding these attacks telling him that these were counter-productive. He said the issues of regional stability and rehabilitation of the IDPs were also discussed."

"Gilani Tells U.S. To Stop Drone Attacks" "Daily Times" (07/24)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has again asked the United States to stop drone attacks and respect Pakistan's sovereignty. Talking to U.S. Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, who called on him at the PM's Secretariat on Thursday, Gilani said the people of the Tribal Areas were extremely upset over the attacks."

"U.S. Keen To Avoid Past Mistake: Holbrooke" "Dawn" (07/24)

"The United States is working to avoid mistakes that allowed vanquished Taliban in Afghanistan to escape into Pakistan and mastermind a deadly insurgency, the regional envoy said on Thursday. 'We'll continue to come back very regularly to improve coordination. That was not (the case) in 2002 and that was grievous mistake,' Richard Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, told reporters."

"Inside Account Of Zardari-Holbrooke Dinner Meeting" "The News" (07/24)

"Changing Pakistani mindset from security to development is perhaps the biggest challenge and it could not be done without settling the issues with our neighbors which require not only a new sincere approach by all concerned parties but also strong international support, said President Asif Ali Zardari in a dinner meeting with President Obama's Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke in the Presidency on Wednesday night."

"Usama's Son May Have Been Killed: U.S. Official" "The News" (07/24)

"One of Osama bin Laden's sons 'may be dead,' a U.S. counterterrorism official told AFP on Thursday, after reports he was likely killed by a U.S. missile strike in Pakistan earlier this year."

"Taliban Deny Usama Son's Death In Drone Strike" "The News" (07/24)

"Senior Afghan Taliban and Punjabi militant commanders, having close association with Arabs, have denied the reports of death of Saad bin Laden, son of Al Qaeda Chief Usama bin Laden in airstrikes by the CIA-operated spy planes in the tribal areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border."

"Usama Still In Pakistan: Mullen" "Daily Times" (07/24)

"U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen on Thursday said he believed the top leadership of Al Qaeda, including

Usama Bin Laden, was in Pakistan, while talking to Al Jazeera TV."

"U.S. Defence Secretary Calls On CJCS" "The News" (07/24)

"U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defence for Asia Pacific Security Wallace Gregson, on Thursday, highly acclaimed the services and sacrifices of Pakistan Army terming it invaluable adding U.S. will keep on supporting Pakistan through thick and thin. He expressed these views during his meeting the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee Gen. Tariq Majid at Joint Staffs Headquarters on Thursday in Rawalpindi."

"U.S. Survey Finds Decline In Support For Suicide Attacks In Pakistan" "Dawn" (07/24)

"Pakistan is one of the few countries in the world where America's image has not improved much after President Barack Obama entered the White House in January this year. The global attitude survey by the Washington-based Pew Research Centre released on Thursday. The survey also discovered a dramatic decrease in support for suicide bombings in Pakistan."

"Now's Not the Time To Talk Civil N-Pact: France" "The News" (07/24)

"France and Pakistan will start technical level talks for the safety and security of the existing nuclear installations but no discussion is planned for enhancing cooperation in civil nuclear energy at this point of time, the visiting French Minister for Foreign Trade, Anne Marie, said."

"1,700 Terrorist Killed In Operation Rah-e-Rast, Says Mukhtar" "The News" (07/24)

"The Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmad Mukhtar has said that so far 1,700 terrorists had been killed in the operation Rah-e-Rast, while talking to media men in Islamabad on Thursday."

"Maulana Fazlullah Is Alive, Claim Taliban" "Dawn" (07/24)

"The Taliban denied on Thursday claims that Maulana Fazlullah, the architect of a brutal uprising in Swat, had been wounded and threatened to renew its armed action. 'Taliban Chief Fazlullah is alive, healthy and has never been wounded,' his spokesman Muslim Khan told AFP on Thursday by telephone from an undisclosed location."

"Eight More Militants Killed In Swat" "The News" (07/24)

"Security forces claimed to have killed eight more militants and recovered a Prado used by the Swat Taliban chief Maulana Fazlullah during search operations in Mauja Kandao and Dadrah areas of Kabal Tehsil in Swat Valley on Thursday. Also, two bodies of militants were found in Mingora city, a spokesman for the Swat Media Centre told reporters."

"Soldier, 2 Militants Killed In Malakand Clash" "The News" (07/24)

"A soldier and two militants were killed and another security man sustained injuries in an exchange of fire in Thana area of Malakand Agency on Thursday, sources said."

"Two Commanders Among 30 Militants Arrested" "The News" (07/24)

"The security forces arrested two militant commanders and destroyed two houses in Charmang Valley while political administration apprehended 28 suspected persons from different areas in Khan subdivision in Bajaur Agency on Thursday."

"4 Militants Held In Darra Adamkhel" "The News" (07/24)

"The security forces claimed to have arrested four militants and blow up an explosive-laden van in Darra Adamkhel, Frontier Region (FR) Kohat on Thursday."

"Official Kidnapped, Elder Shot Dead In Bajaur" "Dawn" (07/24)

"Sources said that armed persons abducted Nimatullah Khan, the Coordinator of Governor Special Project, in the tribal region. He

was shifted to some unknown place. No group has so far claimed responsibility for abduction of the official. In another incident, unidentified assailants shot dead tribal elder Malak Zakir Khan in Chengazo area of the agency."

"About 385,000 IDPs Have Returned: UN" "Dawn" (07/24)

"Some 385,000 people displaced by offensive against the Taliban have returned home, but most of those made homeless by the conflict are sheltering outside camps, according to officials. 'According to the government, return continues at a significant pace,' UN humanitarian coordinator Wolfgang Herbinger told a news conference in Islamabad on Thursday.

Editorials/Op-eds

"America's Animosity In The Garb Friendship," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (07/24)

"American president's Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke has stressed upon Pakistan to move its military from Indian border to tribal belt at Afghan border and Balochistan in order to widen the scope of the ongoing military operation.... Earlier on, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and British Foreign Secretary Miliband have described India as Pakistan's friend.... This American and British policy is meant to weaken Pakistan and to make it convenient for India to gobble it up.... Duly helped by America, India is increasing its defense capabilities against us only. In these circumstances, Holbrook's advice is tantamount to open enmity."

"Folly Of Drone Attacks," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (07/24)

"On a logistical level, the military operation in Malakand cannot be compared to the ongoing offensive in Waziristan.... The mood is different in the case of South Waziristan, partly because of America's relentless drone attacks in the region. People across the country are now convinced that the battle in Malakand is Pakistan's own war but that level of support does not extend to operations in Waziristan. The reason: continued American strikes which brazenly violate Pakistan's territorial sovereignty. That fight is seen by many as America's war, primarily because of the death and destruction unleashed by U.S. drones.... American strikes have come in the way of Pakistan taking ownership of the battle in the tribal belt, and given fresh ammunition to elements whose political agenda is more or less limited to stoking anti-U.S. sentiment.... America's concern over cross-border infiltration by the Taliban is understandable. But Washington too must realize that it is time to so empower Pakistan that it can do the job on its own."

"Charm Offensive," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (07/24)

"He (Mr. Holbrooke) understands that there is a deep well of anger and resentment towards the U.S. by many - perhaps most - of the people of Pakistan, and their animosity is in no small part a direct product of the eight years of the Bush presidency. Six months of Obama is not going to cancel out eight years of Bush, but at least a credible effort is nowadays being made by the U.S. to engage in dialogue with us rather than shout at us from the sidelines.... We are moving into a different type of relationship with the U.S. Uncle Sam can wave the big stick, but he can also be attentive and avuncular and it is his interests that Pakistan does not slide into the darkness currently offered by the Taliban. Keep coming Mr. Holbrooke, and keep listening - because if you don't listen you don't learn anything."

"Exercise Restraint," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (07/24)

"The apprehension expressed by the Pakistani leadership in a meeting with Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke that the latest American offensive launched in south of Afghanistan close to the Durand Line will push the militants into Balochistan and FATA ought to be taken

seriously by the Obama administration.... Instead of trying to make things better, the U.S. could end up making the situation much more complex with Pakistan between a rock and a hard place.... On the contrary, the Special Envoy's, ton and tenor suggested U.S. indifference. He urged Islamabad to extend its fight against militancy along the border with Afghanistan and Balochistan. This will have disastrous consequences for Pakistan's security."

"Prerequisites Of The War On Terror, And U.S. Measures," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (07/24)

"We need a strategy whereby the Taliban in Afghanistan are eliminated just as they have been uprooted in Pakistan. For this to happen, the U.S. and allied forces need to intensify security along the Durand Line so that Taliban's infiltration into Pakistan is stopped and they are eliminated in Afghanistan. The Allied forces need to take comprehensive measures to eliminate the Taliban completely so that we are forever rid of the scourge of terrorism and extremism"

"Continuity Of American Do More And Drone Attacks," an op-ed by Professor Shamim Akhtar in Karachi based pro-Jamaat-e-Islam magazine "Friday Special" (07/24)

"American general who is heading NATO forces in Afghanistan recently arrived on a secret visit to Islamabad and met with Pakistan's President Zardari and the Army chief General Kayani blaming Pakistan Army's performance as unsatisfactory. The U.S. General also complained that Pashtuns from Quetta are supporting Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan Army is not taking any action against these elements. The U.S. general should not be surprised on this, when American troops can travel eleven thousands miles from the United States, and arrived in Afghanistan, then why cannot Pashtuns from Waziristan and Quetta support their brothers in Afghanistan?"

"Waziristan Vs Swat," an op-ed by Ali Abbas Rizvi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (07/24)

"The single most important factor in the whole scenario is that unlike the militants in Swat, the Taliban and Al Qaeda in South Waziristan are facing an increasing number of U.S. drone attacks. These attacks are turning out to be extremely effective, accurate and demoralizing for the militants. There has been a significant change in the American mindset with Washington no longer treating Baitullah Mehsud as Pakistan-specific problem. The Americans are sharing more information with the army, even providing real time intelligence on the movement of militants in the region.... The day Baitullah is gone the militants will lose their sting. For security forces, time is of essence. They will have to keep the militants from taking over the cleared territory again. Waziristan is going to be a tough operation for security forces. However, as things stand today, there is no easy way out."

"Monkeys On Keyboards," an op-ed by Cyril Almeida in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (07/24)

"If the army had perfect knowledge, Maulana Fazlullah and his circle of top commanders would all be dead by now. There is also simply no way the politicians could have known precisely what the generals or the militants or the other, some regional, players were thinking. And the Americans, Indians, Afghans, militants and everyone else could not have known precisely what lay in the hearts of the generals and their intentions with regard to the civilian governments. Imperfect, incomplete and selective information, however, surrounds one central, known fact: that Maulana Fazlullah and his militants were in charge of Swat. And since this was unacceptable to anyone who believes that the state is the only entity that can lay a rightful claim to such authority, the militants needed to be defeated."

"An American 'Defence Umbrella' In The Gulf?," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (07/24)

"The Arab rulers in the Gulf want status quo with no war. They are put off by the prospect of an Israeli attack on Iran. Most of them

have a modus vivendi with Iran, with sanctions-busting trade arrangements.... Iran would be hard put to attack any of these small states, unless they provoke it by accepting a defence umbrella from the U.S. Finally, the outcome of the current crisis will be determined by Iran. The Gulf States will take their cue from how Iran decides to behave towards them."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson